

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MANAMA IMMEDIATE

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FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SHUM, BA, US

SUBJECT: ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

REFERENCE: STATE 18330

1. FINAL TEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR BAHRAIN, WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS BY JANUARY 31, IS TRANSMITTED HERewith. YOU SHOULD, AT YOUR DISCRETION, PROVIDE TEXT OF REPORT TO APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, PRIOR TO THAT DATE.

2. IN PROVIDING ADVANCE COPY TO HOST GOVERNMENT, YOU SHOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN EXPLANATION:

-- THE EFFECT OF LEGISLATION WHICH BECAME EFFECTIVE LAST
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YEAT IS TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY TO SUBMIT A "FULL AND COMPLETE" REPORT ON THE STATUS OF INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS IN EACH COUNTRY WHICH RECEIVES EITHER DEVELOPMENT OR SECURITY ASSISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES.

-- WE BROUGHT THIS LEGAL REQUIREMENT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT LAST NOVEMBER.

-- 109 SUCH HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE

CONGRESS O/A JANUARY 31. WE ARE PROVIDING THEREFORE AN
ADVANCE COPY OF THE REPORT ON BAHRAIN.

-- CONGRESS HAS EXPRESSLY REQUESTED THAT INFORMATION PUB-
LISHED BY INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS BE
INCLUDED IN THE REPORT.

-- THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WILL NOT DISTRIBUTE THESE RE-
PORTS TO THE PRESS OR PUBLIC OR OTHERWISE DRAW ATTENTION
TO THEM. HOWEVER, THEY WILL BE MADE A MATTER OF PUBLIC
RECORD BY THE CONGRESS AND WE EXPECT THEY WILL RECEIVE
ATTENTION IN THE PRESS.

3. BEGIN TEXT: HISTORICALLY THE MOST PROSPEROUS AND
COSMOPOLITAN OF THE ARAB STATES IN THE PERSIAN GULF, BAHR-
AIN PIONEERED IN DEVOTING OIL REVENUES TO SOCIAL WELFARE,
ALTHOUGH IT IS NOW LESS WELL-OFF THAN ITS OIL-EXPORTING
NEIGHBORS. THE GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS IN
BAHRAIN IS CONDITIONED BY A TRADITION OF TOLERANCE. IT
HAS AN EDUCATED POPULATION, INCLUDING THE REGION'S ONLY
NATIVE INDUSTRIAL PROLETARIAT. THEREFORE, THERE IS POLITI-
CAL AND LABOR ACTIVITY OF A KIND HARDLY KNOWN IN NEIGHBOR-
ING STATES. AS A RESULT, THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE
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TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS IS A MIXTURE OF PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL
OUTLOOK AND A FIRM CONCERN FOR STATE SECURITY. THE CON-
STITUTION PROVIDES STRICT SAFEGUARDS FOR PERSONAL LIBERTIES
AND DEDICATES THE STATE TO SOCIAL WELFARE, BUT AFTER A
BRIEF EXPERIENCE WITH REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT THE AMIR
IN 1975 SUSPENDED THE ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

1) RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING
FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN HAS LONG FACED A SMALL BUT WELL-
ORGANIZED RADICAL OPPOSITION WHICH CARRIED OUT A POLITICAL
ASSASSINATION IN LATE 1976. IN DEALING WITH THIS GROUP,
THE AUTHORITIES MAY OCCASIONALLY HAVE PERMITTED THE
TORTURE OF PERSONS DETAINED BY THE POLICE.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN DOES NOT PRACTICE CRUEL, INHUMAN
OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN EMPLOYS PRE-EMPTIVE IMPRISONMENT

IN CASES INVOLVING WHAT IT VIEWS AS SERIOUS AND IMMEDIATE THREATS TO CIVIL ORDER, AS WELL AS PERSONAL THREATS TO MEMBERS OF THE RULING FAMILY, THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, OR RELIGIOUS LEADERS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS OCCASIONALLY DEFINED A THREAT TO CIVIL ORDER TO INCLUDE NON-VIOLENT PUBLIC PROTESTS, BUT IN SUCH CASES THOSE ARRESTED HAVE BEEN DETAINED ONLY BRIEFLY. IN MORE SERIOUS CASES, ONLY A FEW PERSONS REGARDED AS SECURITY THREATS HAVE BEEN DETAINED FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME; THESE CASES HAVE BEEN RE-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VIEWED PERIODICALLY BY THE COURTS IN CONFORMANCE WITH SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE LAW.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

FAIR PUBLIC TRIALS ARE GENERALLY PROVIDED IN BAHRAIN. TRIALS FOR CRIMES JUDGED TREASONABLE MAY BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

THE BAHRAINI AUTHORITIES HAVE SEARCHED WITHOUT WARRANT PRIVATE PREMISES IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS A PERCEIVED THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITIONS AGAINST ARBITRARY INVASION OF THE HOME, ARE, HOWEVER, USUALLY OBSERVED BY THE POLICE.

2) GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST RECEIPT OF SOME OIL INCOME 40 YEARS AGO, THE BAHRAINI REGIME SET AN EXAMPLE IN THE REGION BY LIBERAL POLICIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION. MORE RECENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON COSTLY ANTI-INFLATION SUBSIDIES AND PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMS.

A COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE BOOM HAS INTENSIFIED THE INEQUALITY OF WEALTH IN THIS ESSENTIALLY FREE-ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALLOCATING THE BULK OF ITS PUBLIC RESOURCES TO PROVIDING THE SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS GUARANTEED THE CITIZEN BY THE CONSTITUTION.

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BAHRAIN'S MODEST OIL WEALTH, COMBINED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S RELATIVELY ENLIGHTENED SOCIAL POLICIES, RESULTS IN A REASONABLY EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC WEALTH. TAXATION OF THE PUBLIC IS TOKEN. BAHRAIN TAKES PRIDE IN THE LACK OF CORRUPTION IN ITS PUBLIC LIFE; SOME DOES EXIST, BUT NOT TO THE EXTENT OF ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE POOR.

(3) RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

BAHRAINIS ARE FREE IN THOUGHT AND SPEECH. FROM TIME TO TIME, THE PRESS IS CENSORED, PARTICULARLY IN DISCUSSION OF BAHRAIN'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC, AND RACIAL TOLERANCE IS CHARACTERISTIC OF BAHRAINI SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND LEGAL PRACTICE. THE EASY ACCEPTANCE OF BAHRAINI JEWS IN IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS ATTITUDE.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IS MORE ADVANCED IN BAHRAIN THAN IN ANY OTHER ARABIAN PENINSULA COUNTRY. EDUCATION HAS LONG BEEN AVAILABLE TO WOMEN, AND THEY ARE NOW MOVING TOWARD THE GOAL OF JOB EQUALITY. THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGES THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLED LABOR FORCE.

ALTHOUGH FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY IS GUARANTEED BY THE CONSTITUTION, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS PROHIBITED GATHERINGS WHICH IT HAS CONSIDERED TO BE A THREAT TO PUBLIC ORDER.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

BAHRAINIS ARE FREE TO MOVE WITHIN THE COUNTRY, TO TRAVEL
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ABROAD, AND TO EMIGRATE.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY SUFFERED A SETBACK WITH THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1975. THE PRESENT LACK OF REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS IS, HOWEVER, IN PART

COUNTERBALANCED BY THE RELATIVE EASE OF ACCESS OF CITIZENS TO GOVERNMENT LEADERS. THE CABINET TRADITIONALLY IS BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNITY.

FOR DECADES, BAHRAIN HAS HAD AN ACTIVE LABOR MOVEMENT, WHICH AT TIMES HAS REPRESENTED A POTENT POLITICAL FORCE. TRADE UNIONS, HOWEVER, ARE ILLEGAL. WORKERS ARE INSTEAD ORGANIZED ON AN INDUSTRY-BY-INDUSTRY BASIS INTO WORKERS' COUNCILS. THE COUNCILS PRIMARILY PERFORM SOCIAL WELFARE FUNCTIONS FOR THEIR MEMBERS AND SERVE A LIAISON FUNCTION

WITH MANAGEMENT WITH RESPECT TO WORKER GRIEVANCES.

(4) GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS FOLLOWED THE CASES OF MORE THAN 30 PEOPLE IMPRISONED IN BAHRAIN. IN SEPTEMBER 1975, THE ORGANIZATION WROTE TO THE AMIR ADVOCATING THEIR RELEASE. SUBSEQUENTLY 27 OF 28 WERE RELEASED. SOME OF THESE HAVE SINCE GONE THROUGH THE PROCESS OF RE-ARREST AND RELEASE SEVERAL TIMES.

NO INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ORGANIZATION HAS ASKED FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BAHRAIN.
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